

THE

# HISTORIAN

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

November 2008

## COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The November luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, November 20, 2008, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. The speaker will be Kay Gough, owner of Bay Books. *Reservations are required* and may be made by calling 467-4090. Please call *by noon on Wednesday, November 19*, to assure your reservation and to help us plan seating which is limited to forty-five people. The price of the lunch is \$8.00.

The main order of business at this meeting is the election of board members to serve from January 2009 through December 2011. The nominating committee will submit its recommendations, but we are also asking the general membership for nominations. Because our membership is recorded by computer nowadays, the office of membership chairman will be changed to board member at-large. If you would like to serve or to recommend someone, please call 467-4090 or nominate from the floor at the November meeting. The offices being filled this year are treasurer, secretary, and board member at-large.



A German U-boat sinking a commercial steamer

## German Submarine Activity in the Gulf of Mexico

From the M. James Stevens  
Collection

Edited by  
Eddie Coleman

As in all American wars, the people of the Gulf Coast became very involved and contributed their fair share of action during World War II. One of the biggest surprises (and one of the most hidden secrets) was the great success the German submarines had in the Gulf of Mexico. Aiding Britain

and France with warships, airplanes, supplies, etc., had depleted the defensive armor of the United States. Because of the gaps in the equipment and manpower which were created by this aid, the Gulf Coast had a close brush with catastrophe, far removed from the major theaters of action in Europe and Asia or the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

The United States declared war December 7, 1941, on Japan. On December 11, 1941, Germany and Italy declared war against the United States.

Along the Gulf Coast war preparations were underway in many areas. The Army Air Corps School had been started at Biloxi in June 1941 with construction on the golf course of former Biloxi Country



## THE

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Eddie Coleman, Editor  
Linda-Lou Nelson, PublisherPublished monthly by the  
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Marianne Pluim, Webmaster**LOBRANO HOUSE  
HOURS**MONDAY — FRIDAY  
10:00AM — 3:00PM  
Closed: 12:00—1:00 (lunch)**MISSION STATEMENT**

"TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION."

Club. Ingalls Shipbuilding Corp. had been organized at Pascagoula in 1939 to construct all-welded tankers, but it had refused to build twelve submarines. Drafting of men for military service was underway with much discussion about war preparations. Everybody was busy—if confused as to where they were going.

The enemy struck first! On March 4, 1942, the freighter *Norlindo* was sunk seventy-five miles west northwest of Tortugas in the Gulf. [Tortugas is about seventy miles west of Key West, FL.]

On March 13, 1942, the tanker *Gulfpenn* was sunk just south of the mouth of the Mississippi River with the loss of thirteen of the thirty-eight men in the crew. These were the first of many lives to be lost and injuries to be suffered.

The Gulfport Army Air Field was activated on April 18, 1942, and in the same month the Seabees were successful in obtaining land for a training facility in Gulfport. In addition the U. S. Coast Guard was stationed on Ship Island and other barrier islands to patrol the Gulf, yet in May 1942 the German submarines attacked thirteen tankers and freighters, most of which were just off the northern Gulf of Mexico coast.

This terrific loss in May finally caused an effective blackout of shore lighting. Since ships were forced to follow the curve of the shoreline in sailing through the Gulf, the lights onshore enabled U-boats to lie quietly until vessels were silhouetted and formed an easy torpedo target.

News blackouts also occurred to prevent "loose talk" which might enable German or Italian sympathizers or spies to pass word along. There was much suspicion of people with foreign ac-

cents who were presumed to be un-American. Exhaustive investigation of Axis files after the war, however, found no record of any such activity occurring in transmitting information.

Since many coastal people were involved in water activities, their knowledge of sinkings was effective in aiding with military enlistments, gas rationing, food coupons, and the condemnation of hoarding. Oil and even bodies were washed onto beaches. Such firsthand knowledge of the war and the constant action by the Coast Guard planes and boats in search and rescue work kept people worried.

Because of the numerous attacks and loss of lives, General George C. Marshall wrote to Admiral Ernest J. King to see if everything possible was being done to halt the sinkings or sink the German U-boats. Still, losses continued in June with nine vessels sunk and in July with seven more lost.

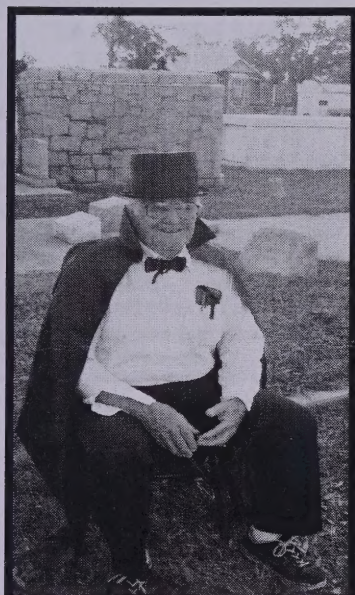
Things took a positive turn for the U. S. on August 1, 1942. A Coast Guard utility amphibian J4F airplane with two men aboard—Chief Aviation Pilot Henry Clark White and Radioman First Class George Henderson Boggs, Jr.—were patrolling an assigned area in the Gulf one hundred miles south of Houma, LA. Suddenly in the bright early afternoon, they saw a submarine (U-166) on the surface. While Chief White turned to attack by diving over it from the stern, Radioman Boggs sent a hurried position message. Although the submarine began a crash dive, Boggs leaned his head out of the window and watched as White fired and scored a direct hit.

In a total of sixty-one bombing attacks, this was the only submarine destroyed by a Coast Guard plane in the war. White was awarded the Distinguished Flying

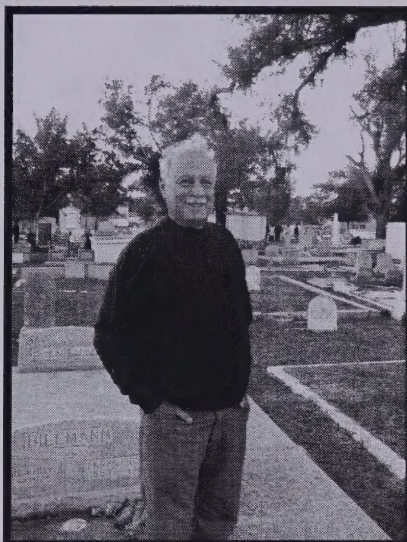


Cross, and Boggs received the Air Medal.

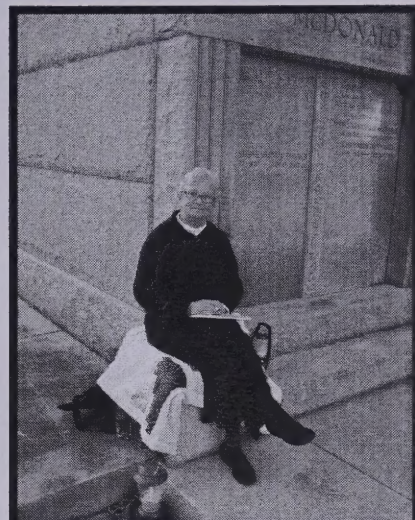
For whatever reason, it seems destruction of this submarine signaled the end of the German submarine success in the Gulf of Mexico. Only two ships were reported lost in August, one twenty-five miles south of Key West, FL, and one south of Houma, LA. The last ship destroyed by a submarine in the Gulf occurred on November 2, 1944, off the coast of Tampa Bay, FL.



Jesse Dykes as  
The Keeper of the Gate



Paul LaViolette as  
Midshipman William P. Canby



Malin Chamberlain as  
Katrina Overall McDonald

## 2008 Cemetery Tour

By  
Eddie Coleman

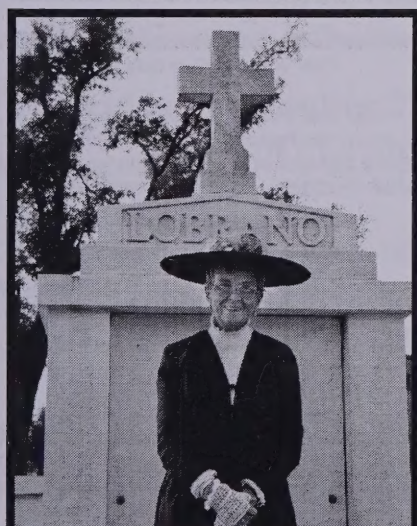
The Fifteenth Annual Cemetery Tour sponsored by the Hancock County Historical Society was held at Cedar Rest Cemetery on October 31, 2008. With the help of many volunteers and the dedication of many fine actors, this year's tour was a rousing success. Guests were greeted at the cemetery by Charles Gray, Executive Director of the Society and Jesse

Dykes, portraying the Keeper of the Gate. Tour guides led visitors through the cemetery stopping along the way for actors portraying persons buried there to tell highlights of the characters' lives.

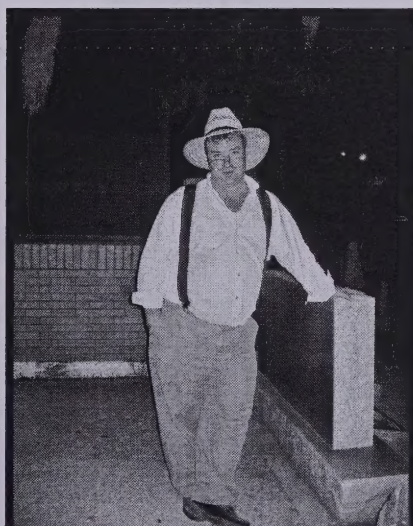
The apparition of **Kate Lobrano** was the first character to greet guests. She owned the house which is now the home of the Hancock County Historical Society and with her husband maintained residences in Pointe a la Hache, LA, and Bay Saint Louis. The ethereal appearance of **Midshipman William P. Canby** related the naval action he saw in the Mississippi Sound during the War of 1812.

Standing near the family vault, the spirit of **John Damborino** was the next to appear. He explained that he arrived in Bay Saint Louis aboard one of the orphan trains from New York City which carried children to new homes throughout the South and West. Moving toward the back of the cemetery, guests were introduced to the spiritual presence of **Katrina Overall McDonald**. She visited Bay Saint Louis where she met her future husband, C. C. McDonald.

The incorporeal being of **Henry B. Chapman** was the next to



Pat Cucullu as  
Kate Lobrano

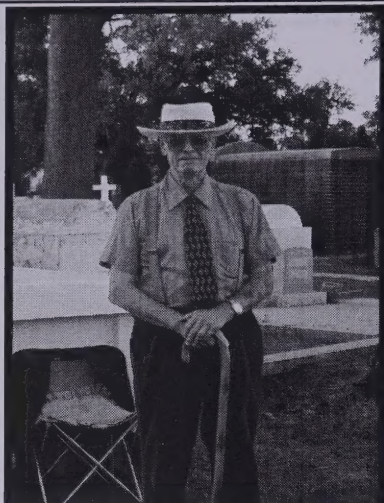


Edward Gibson as  
John Damborino



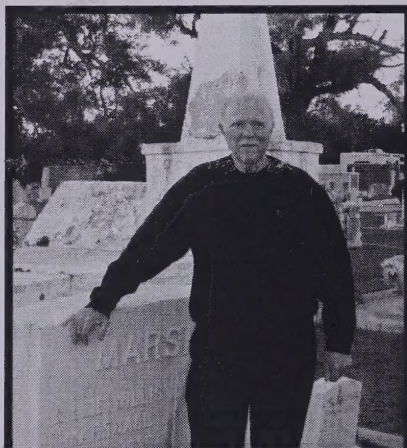


Harry Chapman as  
Henry B. Chapman



George Proulx as  
Charles Sanger

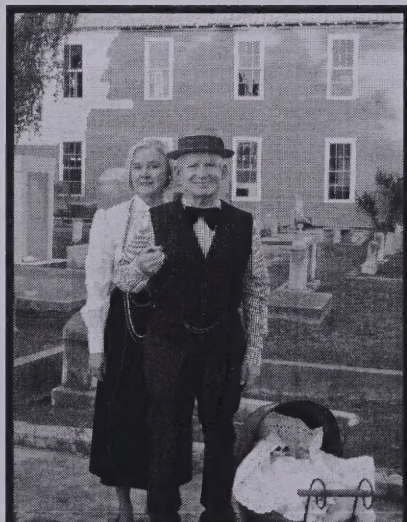
**Charles Marshall** explained that he had been superintendent of the L



Bill Kearney as  
Charles Marshall



Penny Kelly as  
Annie Avery



Hugh & Charlene Stephenson as  
J. V. and Martha Carr Toulme

& N Railroad and had created parks around depots.

Bringing the tour to an end, the spiritual forms of **J. V. Toulme** and his wife, **Martha Carr Toulme**, discussed their life together in Bay Saint Louis. He related that he had been mayor of Bay Saint Louis, and she explained that she had been his "starter" wife and one of the trustees of the grounds and original building of the Methodist Church.

### BOOKS FOR SALE AT LOBRANO HOUSE

*Bay Saint Louis: Celebrating the First 300 Years*  
By the HCHS (\$15.00)

A nostalgic keepsake of the city's history including descriptions and pictures of many of the historic buildings and houses especially those along Beach Boulevard prior to Katrina

*Heritage Cookbook*

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A collection of our members' favorite family recipes

*Holly*

By Paul La Violette (\$20.00)

An intriguing anthology of tales of a tomcat living in a beach house on the Gulf Coast

*Katrina Cookbook*

By Charlet Russell (\$19.95)

A collection of recipes by Bayou Tours

*Mississippi's No-Man's Land*

By Marco Giardino, Ph.D., and Russell Guerin (\$10.95)

The story of the Koch family, early settlers of Hancock County, and their experiences during the Civil War, based on their letters

*One Dog, Two Dogs, Three Dogs, Four...*

By Paul La Violette (\$20.00)

Twice told tales of several dogs living in a beach house on the Gulf Coast

*Sink or Be Sunk*

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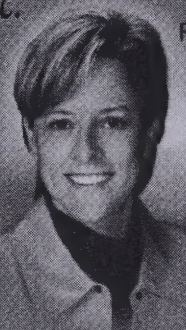
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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

Friday, November 14: 5–7 P. M.  
Mississippi author and writing teacher  
John M. Floyd

signs his newest collection of short stories.

Friday, November 21: 5–7 P. M.  
HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE  
Refreshments, special selections and fun!

Saturday, November 22: 4-6 P. M.  
Editors Charline McCord and Judy Tucker  
sign *Christmas Stories from the South's Best  
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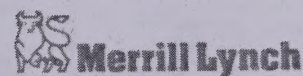
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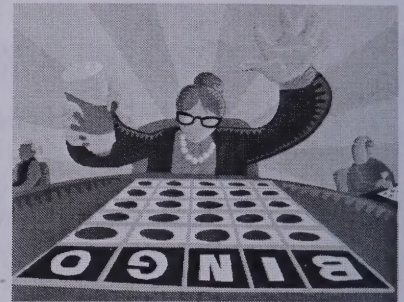




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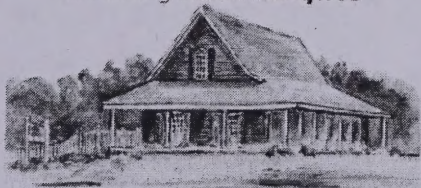
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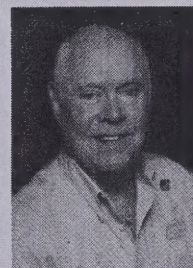
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